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ABSTRACT

Communication researchers have typically specified either cognitions or behaviors as the crucial units of analysis. This cognitive/behavioral dichotomy is evident in current conceptualizations of social relationship as a summative combination of separate behaviors, or a joint product that goes beyond the constituent parts. Choosing cognitive or behavioral data further implies epistemological choices between prospection/retrospection, conditional/stochastic probability, compositional/evolutionary explanation, and global/abstractive laws. In arguing that concomitant cognitive-behavioral research has been underutilized as a viable alternative for examining relational processes, this essay stresses the importance of being sensitized to those underlying epistemological assumptions governing inquiry. Research on intimacy and on developmental, rules-based, reciprocal aspects of relational communication are highlighted as potential areas for cognitive-behavioral convergence within the communication discipline. (Author/AA)

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COMMUNICATION AS SOCIAL RELATIONSHIP: IMPLICATIONS OF THE COGNITIONS-BEHAVIORS DICHOTOMY FOR COMMUNICATION THEORY

Over the past several decades one of the more traditional and prevalent trends within the social sciences reflects an epistemelogical dichotomy that to date has not, for all intents and purposes, been bridged multimethodologically. To a large degree this separation, hereafter referred to as the "cognitions-behaviors dichotomy" within the context of this essay, exemplifies that fact that researchers have paid minimal attention to concomitantly utilizing what might be termed "subjective" and "objective" data in deciphering aspects of social interaction. That is, little is yet known about the conceptual and empirical overlaps which may exist as communication participants assign meaning to and behaviorally sequence themselves in diverse environmental settings.

Philosophically, this state of affairs is rooted within a behavioristic-phenomenological split within the field of psychology--a crucial yet detailed scientific evolvement which lies beyond the scope of this essay.[1] More germane to the present discussion is how communication researchers are confronting this issue as a viable alternative for exploring relational processes. To our knowledge, the most extensive treatment has been recently offered by Seibold as he focused upon:

> "...empirical research involving message variables and verbal attitude measures and assessment of behavioral compliance... probable causes for inconsistent findings in previous research involving attitude-behavior correspondance following communication and to suggest corrections for these problems."[2]

Working within a experimental and positivistic framework, Seibold's exhaustive review and critique of attitude-verbal report-overt behavior relationships not only reinforces the need for further explications of these particular interdependancies,

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but also contains implications for related research. Since his critique and theoretic reformulation is oriented toward linkages between attitudes as determinants of behaviors, and vice-versa, the alternative for looking at behaviors directly over time, and complementing interpretations of patterned interaction with varying cognitive information is overlooked. Two additional articles on attitude-behavior relationships by Larson and Sanders[3] and Steinfatt and Infante[4] also disregard the potentialities of this general area of research. Hawes,[5] on the other hand, argues the overall feasibility of a research framework which would investigate meanings and behaviors "conjunctively" as they represent "the communication phenomenon itself," i.e. "a rapprochement of subjective and objective epistemologies."[6]

When the Seibold and Hawes perspectives are compared, one major difference becomes apparent: Seibold functions only in a positivistic manner in suggesting empiricist guidelines for researching attitude-behavior relationships; Hawes posits the need for positivistic and more phenomenologically oriented epistemologies to converge in the overall process of building a science of human communication. A further perusual of the communication literature reveals that of these two "modes" of thought, Seibold's is by far the more prevalent. It is rare indeed for communication researchers to employ multimethodological designs which stem from different epistemelogical bases in interpreting communication events. Consequently the fruitfulness of such approaches are not known.

Following Altman and Taylor's view that "Social penetration refers to (1) overt interpersonal behaviors which take place in social interaction and (2) internal subjective processes which precede, accompany, and follow overt exchange."[7], this essay argues that concomitant cognitive-behavioral research has been underutilized as a viable alternative for examining relational processes. To support

this claim, this essay will: 1) reveal the cognitive-behavioral dichotomy within selected current conceptualizations of social relationship, discussing the epistemelogical implications for the future development of communication theory; and 2) review and discuss research on developmental, rules-based, and reciprocal aspects of relational communication as potential alternatives for examining cognitive-behavioral conjunctions in future communication inquiries.

First, however, several underlying assumptions need to be explicated at the outset which qualify the perspectives addressed in this essay. Most importantly, it is important to stress that we are not arguing for the superiority of cognitive-behavioral communication research in all situations. The value of epistemelogical choice-making is entirely dependant upon the question(s) being asked by the researchers as they investigate communication. If it is decided that data revealed by a specific research technique is necessary but not sufficient to draw conclusions concerning communicative events, then it becomes the researcher's responsibility to employ multimethodological approaches to sooth this need. Obviously, this situation creates a model whereby focus should be upon the researcher as a competent decision-maker: "Why might additional data-pools offer valuable insights for the purposes at hand?", and "Amongst the alternatives available for research utilization, which should I employ and how might different techniques work in complementary fashion in generating knowledge toward the questions I wish to pursue?" On the other hand, it has been and will continue to be the case that researchers prefer to function within decidedly cognitive or behavioral frameworks. There is nothing inherently negative or worthy of criticism in these cases.

Undoubtedly, diversity in question-asking can aid in the development of a stronger scientific community. While the authors of this essay call for cognitive-behavioral convergence in appropriate situations--to compare and contrast how individual's perceive (construct) and actually sequence (behave) in relation to

their environment, using each 'type' of data to potentially provide some degree of what the other does not in a given research pursuit--we simultaneously acknowledge that research efforts in general should not be dictated by a specific epistemelogical and/or empirical bias. Put simply, everybody should not be doing similar research since diverse inquiries demand varying research dispositions. It is in this light that we propose to highlight some of the possibilities for and implications of future cognitive-behavioral research within the communication discipline.

CONCEPTS OF SOCIAL RELATIONSHIP

In a recent essay Morton, Alexander, and Altman state, ". . . the key ingredient to understanding social ties between people is reflected in the properties of their relationship to a degree equal to or greater than in their characteristics as separately functioning individuals."[8] Their point is typical of the currently popular trend to explain social behavior, including human communication, from a focus on "the social relationship, not the actors taken separately." That is, for the questions they stress the best explanatory framework for communication focuses on forms of interaction among participants rather than on the isolated attributes of interacting individuals.

Although this focus on social relationship seems to be gaining momentum in the field of communication, considerable disagreement remains in terms of conceptualizing how communication reflects that social relationship. The recent view of communication research edited by Gerald Miller[9] provides a convenient reference in this regard. This single volume contains a variety of current, yet different conceptualizations of communication as social relationship. Morton, Alexander, and Altman, for example, conceptualize relationship as "mutuality of relationship

definition."[10] For Pearce "coordination" is the key term in his model of meaning management.[11] Cushman and Craig assume a more individualistic stance and view relationship as "the regulation of consensus in regard to the development, presentation, and validation of individual self-conceptions."[12] Millar and Rogers utilize a message-exchange model for interpreting social interaction, suggesting that the social relationship is located in the interface between relational messages and is thus transactional.[13] Conceptualizing communication as cognitive similarity, Duck posits an information hierarchy with information about personality at the apex.[14] Roloff suggests that relationships are characterized by agreements among individuals to interact for the purpose of maximizing individual rewards.[15]

The common thread that runs throughout these partially disparate conceptualizations of social relationship is the focus on the interaction among communicating individuals rather than on individual characteristics per se. All these authors agree that individuals serve to define the social relationship, but they differ on whether the relationship is to be conceptualized as a summative or a created property of the interaction. As a summative property (i.e., a+b) the social relationship is conceptualized as the combination or overlap of the individuals' cognitions, definitions, or internalized phenomena of one sort of another. Cushman and Craig, Duck, and Roloff clearly view the social relationship as a summative property of the individuals' self-conceptions, perceptions, cognitions, personalities, etc. On the other hand, Millar and Rogers (and possibly Morton, et al.) conceptualize social relationship as a property which is created (i.e., ab) by the social situation. They explicitly state, "The [communication] system is viewed as a joint product of behavior, a product admittedly made up of individual actions, but one that has a 'life' of its own which goes beyond the sum of its constituent parts."[16]

The critical difference between social relationship viewed as a summative property or as a created property in current research appears to be the distinction between the units of crucial analysis, i.e., cognitions or behavioral sequences. In this sense, Pearce's model of coordinated meaning-management is abstract enough to lie "on the cusp" of this distinction as individuals choose episodes to enact from some cultural repertoire of episodes. Meaning is thus, at once, both cognitive and behavioral. Comprised exclusively of cognitions, however, a social relationship is conceptualized as a spatial property (i.e., extended through time) and may be modelled as the overlap between two intersecting cognitive systems. As behavioral sequences, on the other hand, a social relationship requires temporal conceptualization in the form of a punctuated sequence of behaviors (i.e., externaized and directly observable) which exist as a holistic entity created by and different from the sum total of the behavioral acts which comprise that sequence.

Implications

The difference in conceptualizing social relationship as cognitions or behaviors is clearly an epistemological issue in communication research. However, this epistemological distinction implies further distinctions within the explanatory framework of communication theory -- distinctions which are crucial to further development of communication theory and cumulative growth of research knowledge in communication. These implications involve choice-points of which every communication researcher and theorist should be aware. And these choices stem directly from the initial concepts of communication/social relationship as cognitive-summative or behavioral-created.

Prospection vs. Retrospection. A common assertion is that cognitions precede actions, thus suggesting a prospective analysis of social relationship. That is, the individual cognitions serve to define the situation and provide the guiding force for future actions. In this way, future behaviors or outcomes are preditable from assessing the cognitions.[17] Weick argues an opposing point of view:

> It may be that cognitions have little effect on behavior, because it follows rather than precedes behavior. Cognitions may be retrospective; they may make sense of what has happened rather than what will happen. . . . It is actions that provide the content for cognitions, and in the absence of action, cognitions are vacuous.
>
> The principal argument here is that too little attention has been paid to actions and too much to cognitions, plans, and beliefs. Cognitions may well summarize previous actions rather than determine future actions, yet this possibility has not been considered seriously.[18]

This prospective-retrospective dichotomy provides a further implication in the form of a choice between attentional or perceptual processes. Weick goes on to argue that retrospection implies an emphasis on attentional rather than perceptual processes:

> The concept of [perceptual] sets imputes a reactive quality to perception and misses the point that perception creates as well as reacts to an environment. . . . When we study attention, it is not important to discover immediately all prior expences that an actor has had. Instead, the immediate question concerns what is happening in the actor's present situation that controls the nature of the attention he directs to his past experience.[19]

Thus, according to Weick, focusing on cognitions as the crucial unit in analyzing social relationship implies a prospective (present-to-future) explanation of communication. On the other hand, focusing on behavioral sequences as the crucial unit of analysis emphasizes a retrospective (present-as-container-of past) explanatory framework involving attentional processes. However, it is

also possible, although not in Weick's framework, to define cognitions in a retrospective manner. Such is the case with, for example, stimulated recall procedures as a phenomenological research technique.

Conditional probability vs. Stochastic probability. The typical logic of doing science involves conceptualizing the connection between theoretical terms as a conditional-probability statement. That is, if condition A is satisfied, then B will be the consequent. In other words, B will occur conditionally upon the prior occurence of A (at a specifiable level of confidence). Such a logic is well suited to the more typical prospective framework emphasizing cognitions as antecedent condition-states.

Shifting to behavioral sequences as the unit of analysis, however, often implies the substitution of stochastic-probability statements. The later type of logical statement implies that event B follows event A at a certain level of probability (actually measured by retrospective analysis of past sequences). The stochastic probability is thus not so much a level of confidence in the truth or validity of the A-B connection but an empirically derived measurement of how often B actually did occur subsequent to A. The occurence of B is thus not conditional upon the prior occurence of A but has followed A in a specific proportion of observed instances. Stated differently, the logic implied by conditional probability conceptualizes the future to be predictable from the present or the present predictable from the antecedent past. The logic of stochastic probability conceptualizes the present to be extended into the future or the past extended into the present.

Compositional Explanation vs. Evolutationary Explanation. As stated previously, the concept of a cognition or any internalized phenomenon is a theoretical term which is definable by its attributes or properties which it possesses.

A cognition is thus conceptualized as a spatial entity within an explanatory framework consistent with, but not exclusive to, a positivistic theory. A behavioral sequence, on the other hand, is inherently an event classifiable only in terms of time attributes -- e.g., duration, sequentiality, simultaneity, etc.

On the one hand, cognitions comprising social relationships most often lead to a compositional explanation of social relationships definable by the structural properties or attributes of that relationship regardless of time parameters. It is rare for cognitions to be defined sequentially. But social relationship definable by sequential behaviors leads to an evolutionary explanation which utilizes a framework composed of stochastic and constantly changing constraints.

Global laws vs. Abstractive laws. A corollary of the compositional-evolutionary explanation dichotomy is the distinction between global and abstractive laws. According to Mandelbaum, the difference between these types of laws is the difference between explanatory frameworks. That is:

> In an abstractive law the attempt is made to state a relation between specific aspects or componenets which are present in a state of affiars, and to state this relation in such a way that it will be applicable in all cases in which these particular aspects or components are present. In formulating such a law, the specific nauter of the state of affairs. . . is only considered with respect to the initial and boundary conditions which must be taken into account in applying the law.
>
> On the other hand, it is possible to regard some entities in terms of their global properties. . . . we can formulate law-like statements concerning changes in their global properities, or concerning relationships between the nature of the system as a whole and the manner in which its component parts behave. . . . a reference to the properties of the system is included in the law which we formulate.

> The distinction is not one between non-holism and holism, but between laws which are formulated in terms of particular aspects or components which have been abstracted from a concrete state of affairs, and laws which are formulated in terms of the nature of particular types of laws which are formulated in terms of the nature of particular types of systems. In other words, there is a difference in what the laws are <u>about</u>. Abstractive laws are about the relationships between two aspects or components that occur in a variety of different concrete situations; . . . Global laws. . . are about the properties of system as a whole is related to its component parts.[20]

In this light, conceptualizing social relationship as cognitions lends itself to the development of abstractive laws within a compositional (abstracted properties) explanation formalized in conditional-probability statements. Conceiving of social relationships as behavioral sequences, however, leads to an evolutionary explanation formalized within stochastic-probability statements leading to the development of global laws. Thus, the difference in conceptualizations of social relationships within communication research leads to a difference in explanatory frameworks, logics-in-use, and even theoretical outcomes of that research in the form of global or abstractive laws. These varying perspectives of relationship are indeed formidable and crucial choice-points, implying that other crucial choices must be made which directly and indirectly affect the future status and development of communication research and theory.

IMPLICATIONS FOR RESEARCH

The cognitions-behaviors dichotomy is clearly a theoretical issue. Specifically the issue is epistemological -- i.e., what is the nature and source of data to be used in communication research? However, if the issue remains at the epistemological level, cognitions and behaviors will likely remain dichotomous, and potentials for generating knowledge claims of this general type will not emerge in research processes. Thus, the following research program is proposed, not for

the purpose of determining the ultimate truth or falsity of either cognitions or behaviors as the "real" communicative data, but for the purpose of assessing the appropriateness of utilizing both forms of data in communication research.

Correlates of Cognitions and Behaviors

One of the initial steps in the research program is to discover the correlations between cognitive data and behavioral data. We earlier characterized the community of communication scholars as residing on a continuuum polarized by different research commitments -- internalized and externalized sources of data. In reality, no such continuum presently exists. That is, communication researchers appear to reside at either end of the polar extremes with little, if any, extant research which would be characteristic of the middle-ground positions -- i.e., research which attempts to amalgamate both forms of data. Needless to say, the underlying intent which guides this essay is the hope that these polar extremities do not remain permanent dwellings of communication scholars.

At first glance, the search for cognitive-behavioral correlates appears to be similar to what philosophers of science have termed a "crucial experiement." However, the proposal suggested here differs from a crucial experiement in one important aspect. While a crucial experiment pits the data generated from two theories against each other for the purpose of demonstrating the superiority of one of those theories, the search for cognitive-behavioral correlates attempts to discover silimarities (rather than differences) among the data generated from differing theoretical perspectives. Stated differently, the purpose of a crucial experiment is to test theories and thus reject whichever theory does not meet the researcher's criterion. The purpose of correlates, on the other hand, is to integrate perspectives (by incorporating the strengths of each perspective) and subsequently develop alternative frameworks for explaining communicative events.

This is not to state, however, that synthesis per se is an inherently useful activity. Rather, it may prove fruitful for given research activities, a view which is admittedly the underlying empirical question remaining to be answered in future inquiries.

With integration as one of the key principals underlying this research program, the discovery of correlates between cognitive and behavioral data takes on a new meaning. Depending entirely upon the questions asked, to the extent that cognitive and behavioral data are highly correlated, then those variables might be considered crucial to communication research. Conversely, to the extent that the data are not correlated, then those variables may be less crucial to human communication. As a case in point, if a cognitive variable generates data for which there are few (or low) correlates in behavioral data, then that variable may function as a psychological variable which has little explanatory power (i.e., little impact) on the communicative process. And if a behavioral variable has few (or low) correlates with cognitive data, then that variable could prove to be less crucial to human communication. What follows, then, are suggestive areas of inquiry which could benefit from concomitant research into cognitions-behaviors correlates.

Intimacy and Developmental Communication

Several projects appear to be prime candidates for initial research attempts to discover correlates of cognitions and behavioral sequences. For example, intimacy is a variable which seems to be increasingly popular in communication research and is often characterized as a variable of the situation (e.g., marital pairs) rather than defined by cognitions or behaviors. But when characterized as either cognitions or behaviors, communication researchers generally have not attempted to utilize the two forms of data concomitantly. Intimacy is usually

characterized as the result of cognitive orientations (generally assessed by self-reports), or it is embodied in the behaviors (typically associated with self-disclosure and interactional codings). A significant research project would attempt to utilize both forms of data, generating cognitive data which assesses degree of intimacy and correlating those data with specific behavioral sequences which demonstrate intimate communication. Under what conditions will cognitive assessments of low intimacy be correlated with behavioral sequences typical of low intimacy? And, is intimacy a significant communication variable only to the extent that cognitions and behavioral patterns are highly related? These and other questions remain to be answered by additional research inquiry, and could probably lead to more in-depth interpretations of the role of intimacy across communication contexts.

Intimacy is also inherent within a majority of current interpersonal communication theories which include developmental explanations of relationship behavior. Why some relationships stagnate or disintegrate while others retain high levels of intimacy and how participants mutually influence one another from zero-history points are crucial questions which underlie these perspective. Miller[21] has suggested that the current conceptual shift in interpersonal communication is best described as "developmental," largely because it captures the processes involved in moving from initial (usually noninterpersonal) to more intimate encounters between individuals. Closely related to this developmental issue is the literature on phases of group development which characterize a variety of group interaction.[22] In any case, the manner and degree to which types of relationships do or do not evolve have been dominant areas of inquiry within the communication discipline.

Unfortunately these research concerns have also been verified empirically by either cognitive or behavioral measurement techniques -- but not both. Thus, correlates of internalized and externalized states of interaction do not exist which reflect the evolutionary or developmental nature of social interaction. However, since cognitive or behavioral data have been proved to be useful in characterizing "stages" of interpersonal relationships, even more potential exists if researchers were to consider correlates of specific developmental cases.

For example, cognitive-behavioral correlates could be utilized to classify individual as well as relationship styles in varying contexts. What characterizes how different individuals deal with initial encounters? And how do cognitive-behavior correlates change as interpersonal exchanges become progressively more intimate and frequent within a particular relationship? Stated differently, what are the cognitive-behavior correlates of interpersonal as distinguished from 'noninterpersonal' communication? And how might they serve to explain processual notions underlying relationship development? Phrased simply, what do cognitive-behavior correlates "look like?" And how might they reflect the "assembly affect bonus" of persons relating with other persons over time?

Rules Approaches to Communication

If one wishes to adopt rules formulations for purposes of research, many alternative perspectives have been posited as explanatory frameworks for rule-governed social behavior. However, all seem to follow one basic assumption and ask similar questions. Harré states:

> The method by which human beings manage their affairs, and create society, is by the invention and promulgation of rules, in the following of which social behavior is generated . . . [But] if we adopt the concepts of 'rule' and 'role-following' as our major conceptual tools for the analysis of human social behavior, what sort of picture of social life do we get, and what sort of a science of social life would follow their adoption?[23]

In response to these questions, two interrelated approaches have emerged as dominant research emphases in communication.[24] Headed by Cushman and his associates[25] the first approach considers individual's self-conceptions as generative mechanisms for rule-oriented behavior. Pearce[26] advocates the second approach which stresses the intricacies involved in managing meaning associations during episodic interaction. While Pearce's orientation seems to view relationships as shared and creative, Cushman's focus is more individualistic and has summative implications. However, both perspectives are interrelated in that they view communication rules as fundamental in nature but complex in scope.[27]

Recently, Cushman and Pearce have combined their perspectives into an essay which promotes the need for programmatic rules research.[28] By analyzing interpersonal task regularities in relation to episodic sequences, they propose that communication processes can be fruitfully explored. Of particular relevance is how communicators regulate consensus among themselves, since (1) for problems to be resolved, action must be cooperative; (2) communication is the means by which cooperation evolves; (3) consensus upon regulation determines, to a large extent, the quality of communication exhchange.[29]

The explanatory goals of Cushman and Pearce certainly deserve inquiry. However, the means by which they intend empirically to verify their claims lead to a potential contradiction in their theoretical perspective. Put simply, they claim that their approach will account for coordinated <u>behaviors</u> across communication events, yet they propose utilizing <u>mentalistic</u> instruments to determine these relationship regularities. At no time do they propose assessing or identifying the behavioral regularities. Cushman's views of the self-conception and Pearce's reliance upon individual's goal-oriented constructions of episodes are cognitively-based; communicative behaviors are thus empirically ignored within

their proposed framework. Empirical research would thus reveal less about the creative properties of social interaction than the cognitive states of individuals being observed.

To remedy this empirical problem, research should attempt to correlate cognitive and behavioral interpretations of communication rules.[30] Because there have been few empirical investigations of communication rules, the tendency to polarize data as either cognitive or behavioral is not so evident. This state of affairs is rather unique among areas of communication inquiry, and could prove extremely advantageous for longitudinal rules research. Whether communication rules are generated from episodes of interaction or individual's self-conceptions seems worthy of distinction as well as when and how each origin operates. But of even greater import is what these two perspectives could gain by correlating how persons perceive (expect) and follow (sequence) their daily lives. Similar to "intimacy" and "stages" of relationships, rules may become significant sets of communication variables to the extent that cognitive-behavior correlates exist. If high correlations are found to exist, rules could be said to have greater importance in communication research.

Furthermore, if communication is conceived as the means by which persons coordinate and regulate their actions to achieve consensus, what types of cognitive-behavior correlates emerge in this process? What are cognitive-behavior correlates of cooperative vs. disruptive behavior? Can these correlates lead to interpretations of particular rules which are or are not conducive to "quality exchange"? Finally, can one justify the conclusion that certain interactions are 'rule-governed' if either cognitive or behavioral-sequence information is the exclusive criterion for judgment? If so, generalizability of results can be said to be limited to the extent to which correlations of the two pools of data

are not investigated. Researchers should always be keenly aware of the parameters of their knowledge claims.

Reciprocity

The phenomenon of reciprocity has long been prominent in the literature of social interaction. Most evident as a variable in self-disclosure and intimacy research, reciprocity is so common as to be called a "norm"[31] of interaction. In fact, Pearce and Sharp[32] discuss reciprocity under the label of symmetry and label it the "best documented characteristic of self-disclosing communication." As a variable of communication research, however, reciprocity reflects a disparity of operationalizations and conceptualizations. That is, reciprocity is observable as either (a) a cognitive variable or a behavioral variable, or (b) an outcome variable or a process variable.

Pearce and Sharp recognize the confusion of the cognitive-behavioral dichotomy when they suggest that "studies often confounded actual [behavioral] and perceived [cognitive] similarity in disclosure."[33] Clearly the bulk of research has viewed reciprocity as an outcome of social interaction in the sense that the research designs have typically included correlations to tap the overall similarity of interactants' behaviors or cognitions. For example, one typical research design, treating reciprocity as a cognitive variable, is to gather questionnaire responses of interactants and correlate these self-reports of their interactions.[34] Such research has led Derlega[35] to define reciprocity as a "response set."

Another research design has been to consider reciprocity as a behavioral variable, again viewed as an outcome, and correlate the overall message exchanges. Behavioral measures have included similarity or matching of the variety of total topics discussed as well as intimacy and duration of messages.[36] This research again emphasizes the commonality of reciprocity as a characteristic of social

interaction. Such research has also suggested, however, that the degree of reciprocity varies with level of intimacy, interaction time, and possibly sex of the interactants.[37]

Few studies have attempted to investigate the phenomenon of reciprocity as a process variable. That is, few researchers have operationalized reciprocity as a behavioral response-in-kind (i.e., behavioral matching) during interaction. One such study by Hancock[38] reconfirms the remarkable consistency of the reciprocity phenomenon in interaction. Similarly Scheflen,[39] defining reciprocity as "essentially nonverbal," refers to reciprocals as "fundamental" to communication.

It seems that research into the phenomenon of reciprocity reflects some empirical as well as conceptual disparity on one hand, and the fact that researchers employ different designs for different questions on the other. Unfortunately the typical research reaction has been to perceive the former diparity as an either-or problem. In other words, we tend to see reciprocity as <u>either</u> cognitive <u>or</u> behavioral, outcome <u>or</u> process. The research problem is, then, to discover which interpretation is "correct." In the process of performing such once-and-for-all research, however, one can easily lose perspective of communicative reciprocity as an insight into social relationship. And as a relationship, the function of reciprocity in communication is not nearly as simplified as it has been proposed to be.

Bateson[40] provides an informative insight into the complexity of reciprocity within his discussion of "schismogenesis" -- that is, progressive differentiation among interacting members of a society. If symmetrical matching of cognitions or behaviors continues indefinitely, Bateson suggests that "each group [or individual] will drive the other into excessive emphasis of the pattern, a process which if not restrained can only lead to more and more extreme rivalry and ultimately to hostility and the breakdown of the whole system."

But Bateson suggests yet another definition of reciprocity other than merely matching the responses of the other. According to Bateson, a particular relationship may appear to be asymmetrical "but symmetry is regained over a large number of instances." For example, John and Marcia may appear to have an asymmetrical (i.e., nonreciprocal) relationship since each does not match the other's behavior X with X, or other's behavior Y with Y. But reciprocity or symmetry occurs over the long run when John responds with Y to Marcia's X and with X to Marcia's Y. In return, Marcia also responds with Y to John's X and with X to John's Y. According to Bateson, the overall relationship thus exhibits reciprocity -- "The reciprocal pattern . . . is compensated and balanced within itself and therefore does not tend toward schismogenesis."

Certainly reciprocity is a key variable in defining and assessing a social relationship. Equally certain is the fact that reciprocity is a variable of communication which involves both cognitive and behavioral elements. It is important that communication research account for the simplicities and complexities of reciprocity in empirical investigations -- not just in self-disclosure research but in communication research generally. Toward the end of explaining the role of communicative reciprocity in social relationships, some important empirical questions become evident. How do reciprocal patterns of communicative behaviors correlate with individuals' definitions (cognitions) of the social relationship? With cognitions of schismogenesis or deterioration of a social relationship? How does reciprocity affect the stability of a social relationship? Does reciprocity as message exchanges correlate with perceived reciprocity of relationship definitions? What is the impact of reciprocity as matching other's behaviors, and what is the impact of reciprocity as defined by Bateson on the

definitions of social relationships? Which definition of reciprocity has the greatest impact on the stability of the relationship?

The most important empirical issue does not appear to be that reciprocity is more validly conceptualized as either cognitive or behavioral. Considering the primacy of communication as a social relationship, the more significant and fruitful empirical issue is the extent to which cognitions and behaviors are correlated and when correlations are highest or lowest. Reciprocity is a complex phenomenon in communication theory. And our communication research should reflect that complexity rather than attempt to oversimplify the phenomenon merely for the sake of methodological convenience.

CONCLUSIONS

To study human communicative relationships effectively, researchers must begin with relational rather than individual assumptions. The relatively recent shift toward conceptualizing social interaction as a creative as well as a summative property is a step in the right direction. However, to verify empirically those creative relational processes demands that interdependent states of interaction -- such as cognitions and behaviors -- be correlated across research pursuits. If these dimensions of human communication remain polarized, the extent to which knowledge claims of each general type complement one another will remain unknown. Subsequently, possible overlaps between internalized (self-report) phenomena and observable sequences of behavior will not serve to generate new and fruitful directions for future communication research.

Some of the research implications discussed throughout this paper seem unattainable, as though all forms of data have to be collected in order for any study to be meaningful and hence contribute to scholarly inquiry. By no means do we adhere to (or intend to promote) this overly naive and idealistic stance.

Rather, our concern is that researchers become more sensitized to those underlying epistemological assumptions which consistently affect and are revised by the research interests of individual scholars. Rather than viewing cognitions and behaviors as mutually exclusive or arguing that one is "more true" than the other, communication researchers should begin to confront such questions as "Why might it be more appropriate to utilize one perspective over another?" and "How can allegedly disparate research techniques serve to complement one another to provide more inclusive and less distorted explanations of research issues?"

All in all, more diverse conceptualizations of interpersonal relationships demands that researchers become more competent decision-makers. In so doing, they will indeed find it an asset to be flexible enough to move along the internal-external data continuum and recognize communicative relationships which are separable only through applying research biases. The intent of this essay has been to not only stress the importance of being sensitized to those epistemological assumptions guiding inquiry, but also to argue for the potentiality of converging epistemologies in investigating communicative events. At the very least, such a generalized strategy could provide researchers with an alternative framework for explaining interpersonal relationships. While the possibilities for such a framework to become empirically viable are as yet unknown, at this point it seems to make good conceptual sense to begin to utilize such multimethodological approaches to communication research.

FOOTNOTES

[1] See, for example, a reader edited by T.W. Wann, Behaviorism and Phrenomenology: Contrasting Bases for Modern Psychology, (The University of Chicago Press: Chicago, 1964).

[2] David R. Seibold, "Communication Research and the Attitude-Verbal Report-Overt Behavior Relationship: A Critique and Theoretic Reformulation," HCR, 2 (1975), p. 27.

[3] Charles Larson and Robert Sanders, "Faith, Mystery, and Data: An Analysis of 'Scientific' Studies of Persuasion," QJS, 61 (1975), pp. 179-194.

[4] Thomas M. Steinfatt and Dominic A. Infante, "Attitude-Behavior Relationships in Communication Research," QJS, 62 (1976), pp. 267-278.

[5] A set of three articles critically analyze the implications of this issue. See Leonard C. Hawes, "Elements of a Model for Communication Processes," QJS, sa (1973), pp. 11-21; Lawrence Grossberg and Daniel J. O'Keefe, "I. Presuppositions, Conceptual Foundations, and Communication Theory: On Hawes' Approach to Communication," QJS, 61 (1975), pp. 195-208; Leonard C. Hawes, "II. A Response to Grossberg and O'Keefe: Building a Human Science of Communication," QJS, 61 (1975), pp. 209-219.

[6] Hawes, "II", pp. 218-219.

[7] Irwin Altman and Dalmus Taylor, Social Penetration: The Development of Interpersonal Relationships, (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1973), p. 5.

[8] Teru L. Morton, James F. Alexander, and Irwin Altman, "Communication and Relationship Definition," in G. Miller, ed. Explorations in Interpersonal Communication, (Beverly Hills: Sage Publications, Inc., 1976) p. 106.

[9] Miller, ed.

[10] Morton et al., pp. 105-126.

[11] W. Barnett Pearce, "The Coordinated Management of Meaning," in Miller, ed., pp. 77-36.

[12] Donald P. Cushman and Robert T. Craig, "Communication Systems: Interpersonal Implications" in Miller, ed., pp. 37-58.

[13] Frank E. Miller and Edna L. Roberts, "A Relational Approach to Interpersonal Communication," in Miller, ed., pp. 87-104.

[14] Steve Duck, "Interpersonal Communication in Developing Acquaintance," in Miller, ed., pp. 127-148.

[15] Michael E. Rolott, "Communication Strategies, Relationships, and Relational Changes," in Miller, ed., pp. 173-196.

[16] Millar and Rogers, p. 90.

[17] See Seibold, Larson and Sanders, Steinfatt and Infante.

[18] Karl E. Weick, The Social Psychology of Organizing, (Reading, Mass.: Addison-Wesley, 1969), p. 30.

[19] Ibid., p.39.

[20] Maurice Mandelbaum, "Societal Laws," British Journal for the Philosophy of Science, 8 (1957), p.

[21] Miller, ed., pp. 11-12. Also see Gerald R. Miller and Mark Steinberg, Between People: A New Analysis of Interpersonal Communication, (Chicago: Science Research Associates, Inc., 1975), for a more detailed analysis of their distinctions between "interpersonal" and "noninterpersonal" communication.

[22] For an overview of this literature see B. Aubrey Fisher, Small Group Decision-Making: Communication and the Group Context, (New York: McGraw-Hill, Inc., 1974).

[23] Rom Harre, "Some Remarks on 'Rule' as a Scientific Concept," in Theodore Mischel, ed., Understanding Other Persons, (Totawa, N.J.: Rowen and Littlefied, 1974) p. 143. See also in theis collection of essays Stephen E. Toulmin, "Rules and Their Relevance for Understanding Human Behavior," pp. 185-215, for an inclusive treatment of rules when viewed in hierarchical fashion.

[24] Scholarship oriented toward integrating rules perspectives into communication theory is indeed at an interesting stage of development. Conceptually, attempts to explicate the viability of rules notions are numerous and have received much attention over the past several years. Empirically, rules approaches are starving for methodologies which may lead to verification of the many conceptual claims which now exist. Data collection has, for all intents and purposes, been non-existent. Obviously, the complexities of the phenomenon being investigated have stifled development of measurement procedures required to "catch" communication rules red-handed in the process of affecting human actions. Nevertheless, formulations which suggest that interpersonal dynamics are guided and governed by consensually shared rules among participants are heuristically appealing and deserve further inquiry.

[25] See, for example, Donald P. Cushman and Gordon C. Whiting, "An Approach to Communication Theory: Towards Consensus on Rules," Journal of Communication, 23 (1972), 217-238; Donald P. Cushman and B.T. Florence, "The Development of Interpersonal Communication Theory," Today's Speech, (1974), 11-13; Cushman and Craig, in Miller, ed., 1976.

[26] Pearce, in Miller, ed., 1976; See also Charles M. Rossiter Jr., and W. Barnett Pearce, Communicating Personally: A Theory of Interpersonal Communication and Human Relationships, (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill Co., Inc., 1975); W. Barnett Pearce, "Consensual Rules in Interpersonal Communication: A Reply to Cushman and Whiting," Journal of Communication, 23 (1973), 160-168.

[27] It seems to make intuitive sense that for communication processes to occur at an interpersonal level, coordination efforts need to be made by interacting individuals. Such efforts are based on shared meanings, and resulting behaviors arise from and create new meanings as interaction progresses. Given social definitions of rules, e.g. "...sets of expectations about the appropriate responses to particular symbols in particular contexts...guide posts to direct and indicate shared patterns of expectations.", (Cushman and Whiting 1972, pp. 225-227), it is suggested that explanations can emerge as to how social actors generate and conform or deviate from their rule configurations.

[28] Donald P. Cushman and W. Barnett Pearce, "Generality and Necessity in Three Types of Theory About Human Communication, With Special Attention to Rules Theory," HCR (in press).

[29] Cushman and Whiting, 1972, p. 214.

[30] For an example of how communication rules have been treated behaviorally, see B. Aubrey Fisher, "Relationship Rules: Still Another Step Toward Communication Theory," Paper presented to International Communication Association, Portland, 1976.

[31] Alvin W. Gouldner, "The Norm of Reciprocity: A Preliminary Statement," American Sociological Review, 25 (1960), 161-178.

[32] W. Barnett Pearce and W.M. Sharp,"Self-Disclosing Communications," Journal of Communication, 23 (1973), 418.

[33] Ibid., pp. 409-425.

[34] See, for example, S.M. Jourard, "Self-Disclosure and Other Cathexis," Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology, 59 (1959), 428-431; and Jourard and P. Richman, "Factors in the Self-Disclosure of College Students," Merrill Palmer Quarterly, 9 (1963), 141-148.

[35] V.J. Derlega, "Task Set and Mutual Disclosure in the Dyad." (unpublished), 1972.

[36] See, for example, M. Worthy, A. Gary, and G. Kahn, "Self-Disclosure as an Exchange Process," Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 13 (1969), 59-63; E.V. Chittick and P. Himelstein, "The Manipulation of Self-Disclosures," Journal of Psychology, 65 (1967), 117-121; W.J. Powell, "Differential Effectiveness of Interviewer Interventions in an Experimental Interview," Journal of of Consulting and Clinical Psychology, 32 (1968), 210-215; and S.M. Jourard and P. Jaffe, "Influence of an Interviewer's Cisclosure on the Self-Disclosing Behavior of Interviewees," Journal of Counseling Psychology, 17 (1970), 252-257.

[37] See, for example, P.C. COzby, "Self-Disclosure, Reciprocity and Liking," Sociometry, 35 (1972), 151-160; Irwin Altman, "Reciprocity of Interpersonal Exchange," Journal for the Theory of Social Behavior, 3 (1973), 249-261; B.C. Certner, "Exchange of Self-Disclosure in Same-Sexed Groups of Strangers," Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology, 40 (1973), 292-297; W.B. Pearce, P.H. Wright, S.M. Sharp, and K.M. Slama, "Affection and Reciprocity in Self-Disclosing Communication Between Same Sex Friends, " HCR, 1 (1974), 5-14.

[38] Brenda R. Hancock, "Self-Disclosure Between Roomates: An Interaction Analysis," Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Utah, 1977.

[39] Albert E. Scheflen, Body Language and Social Order: Communication as Behavioral Control. (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1972), p. 13-16. See, also, Albert E. Scheflen, "Quasi-Courting Behavior in Psychotherapy," Psychiatry, 28 (1965), 245-257.

[40] Gregory Bateson, Steps to an Ecology of Mind. (San Francisco: Changler, 1972), pp. 68-69.